

The Lonely Battle

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Where is he? It's not like him to come back home this late. Not that I am worried or anything, but a Saiya-jin can become suspicious of their mate's odd behavior. And that bastard is showing a lot of weird behavior lately. Could there be another? No, there can't be. We have two sons. We actually live with each other. Besides, I would know if there was another female.

I was sitting on the windowsill, looking out. I felt like a child again, and it is a ridiculous feeling. It is pitch black outside. The longer I wait the more impatient I become. The more impatient I become the angrier I get. And the angrier I get... forget it. I clenched my fists together in frustration. The kids are sleeping already, dammit, and I should be too, so if he doesn't get back to the quarters I'm going to look for him. He knows he wouldn't like me angry when I have to look for him.

It's been like this for several days. What's going on? All of the sparring arenas are closed by now, and I bet even his friends have retired for the night. Forget it, I **know** they have. And where was he? He'd better not be playing with that female friend of his...

The doorway behind me swung open. Well, it's about time. I moved swiftly in front of him with a glowering and skeptical look worn on my face. I cracked my knuckles; females can always dominate their mates any time. I'm sure it's not just with us Saiya-jins. It has to be with other races too. If not, then there is another strength we have that they don't. Males, of course, would consider that a weakness, but then again, they are males.

"Well?" I demanded the rough figure in front of me. "What took you? You were supposed to train your sons. Now they're asleep. And you call yourself a father and a leader of a crew. Che."

"Shut up," he growled as he closed the door behind him. "Why didn't you train the brats yourself? They're yours also."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing! Has he forgotten Saiya-jin tradition after being off-planet for a year and having returned home only two months ago? Even** I** remember the little things after being away from Vegetasei for two years. Trust me, I've done it before. "Excuse me? Is it **my** job to teach those two about fighting methods and ki attacks? Is it **my** job to have to teach them the traditions of our race?"

I would've expected a chuckle, or at least a slight smirk. I didn't receive either. Instead, he gave a cold glare and said in a tone to match his expression, "Is it **my** job to teach them everything?"

"No, but you are supposed to train them, teach them the important concepts of our race, and most importantly, how to control their Oozaru form," I growled, my voice getting higher. I could feel the anger that is being shown on my face.

Like a child, he retorted, "You too."

"If we had a daughter, yes, it **would** be my job," my voice higher than previously. He certainly is acting strange today. "The only thing **I'm** supposed to do with male offspring, as much as I regret it, is to teach them some manners and how to work space pods. I don't enjoy it, but I do that anyway. I would expect that you enjoy your part in parenting! You have the fun part!"

"HA!" He yelled to overpower my growing voice. "Unlike you, I happen to have a life outside of, what's the weakling word for it? Oh yes, **family**. If you have a problem with that, I suggest you... you..."

"I what?" I smirked in a calm tone. A loss of words, eh? "Come on, tell me. You suggest that I...?"

"Don't be such a smartass," he snapped. "I don't need," he paused to look around the room before proceeding, "this. Or this," he pointed at me with a nasty glare, "or those!" He pointed at the boys' room. "They are just a waste of time. You were a waste of time and I wish I never mated with you... hell, I wish I never even **met** you!"

That was the last straw. "And what have you ever done, huh?" I yelled, extremely angry, annoyed, and frustrated. "What have you done that was so important? Being a leader of a low-class crew doesn't count! I even doubt you do much, just sit around and let your

second-in-command take over. Clearing out planets has nothing to do with this! That's not important, it only keeps you, and the rest of us Saiya-jins, motivated! And I'm interested in knowing, why were you out so late?!"

"That is none of your business woman!" He growled, matching the pitch of my voice. "I have my reasons and they are damned good enough for it to get it even past Vegeta-Ou himself!"

"Oh really? Then why don't you tell me? Maybe I'm right. Maybe there is another female! Traitor!"

"NANI?! What in Hell ever gave you **that** lame-brained idea? I said it's none of your business, it is none of your business! Do you understand me?"

"Great, not only do you take dominant of your so-called 'friends', but you have to take over your mate also. What did I ever see in you, I wonder. I thought you were someone different when I first met you, but it seems you are no different than any regular male. You aren't special at all!"

If looks could kill, I would be dead right now. The expression on his face was enough to even scare Freeza-sama. But I didn't have enough time to feel any cowardliness inside of me since he did hurt me. I didn't even see it coming, but I did feel a hard blow to my stomach that made me fall to the ground.

He stepped around me, as if I was blocking his path earlier. I heard him go to our room and before he closed the door he yelled, "Don't even bother following me, Zukini."

"I won't have to," I snapped at the same exact moment he slammed the door, "Bardock."

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> <p>How could Raditz sleep through Father and Mother's argument? It was so loud that I'm sure that the Saiya-jins on the other side of Vegetasei heard. In fact, it was so loud, I'm not sure what they were even arguing about. <p>

I went to go check my nine-year-old brother, who was resting on the cot next to mine. The most logical explanation was that he was dead. If so then I'm an only child again! Unfortunately, he's breathing. But he must have heard some parts. He had a very disturbed look on his face. I considered waking him until I heard my parents' bedroom door slam shut.

I walked to our door and slightly opened it. The only person in the room was Mother, who was down on her knees and hugging her stomach. What did I miss? I thought Father would never, ever hurt Mother. He never let anyone else do it. But she is strong, she should be alright. Nothing I have to worry about.

Right again, Turles, I smiled to myself.

Mother had stood up, shaking her head. I saw her clench her fists, then release them, and again, as if to slowly let go of her anger. She walked to the window, head down. Was that sadness I saw in her

eyes, at least as much as I could see of them? They glowered for a moment, then when she closed her eyes, no trace of any emotions could be found. Everything looked fine here, so I decided to go back to sleep.

After I crawled back into the bed, I realized I couldn't sleep. The argument repeated itself in my mind, as I tried to make out what my parents said. After about two hours had passed my door opened. I quickly shut my eyes to make it seem I was asleep. Best not get Father or Mother in a worse mood.

Silence for a minute. I'm sure the person standing there was still standing there. Unless they don't have enough courtesy to close the door. The light came on my eyes and it hurt. I couldn't stand it any longer. "Close the door," I complained.

"Good, you're awake," Mother called with a blank tone. "Get up."

I did what she asked and pointed to Raditz. "What about him? He didn't even wake up when you and Father were arguing, so I doubt he'll even listen to you."

"He will," she said with a type of confidence that I couldn't put my finger on. "If not, then that's no problem either. Get your armor and quietly meet me outside."

I obeyed her and didn't ask any questions, not even to myself, but I was angry with her for showing fear. I knew what she was planning. She was going to run away, taking us with her. Why was she scared of Father for? Just because he laid one smack on her when not sparring...

Or maybe it wasn't that. There could be other reasons beyond the argument. The fight could've just been the last idea to make Mother decided to leave. As I reflected back to the disagreement, it probably had to do something about Raditz and me. But I didn't want to be the reason for my parents being one of the very, very few separated mates on Vegetasei.

I sat on the stone next to the doorstep. It was barely light since the sun was just rising up. But I wasn't paying any attention to that. I was paying more attention to my thoughts. I'm eleven years old, I shouldn't have to go through this! It's just not right, and Father is supposed to train both Raditz and me. I think he was supposed to yesterday, and the days before that. Was that why Mother got so upset with him last night?

"Shush," I heard Mother scold Raditz. "I don't want you to wake your father. You'll be able to get plenty more sleep once we get far away from here."

A groan escaped my brother's lips as the two of them stepped out. Mother looked at me with an expressionless face, but her eyes told me to go along with her. Finally, so Raditz could understand (since he was still sleepy) she announced, "We must leave quickly but quietly. No one can see us. When we get out of this town then we will have some freedom."

Freedom? What did she mean by that? I thought that it was something we already had. Maybe I had to have been able to interpret the

argument to understand fully what she meant. Again, I didn't ask any questions, and just went along with the flow, following right behind Mother to wherever she was planning to go.

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> <p>How **dare** she?! How dare she take my sons away from me?! And she left also! If only Zukini could understand what I was doing last night, but she wouldn't. And it's too embarrassing to tell her. If I did, it would've only made matters worse than they were. As I thought that would be severer, she left. It's true what I said last night: I didn't need them. Maybe it will just take too long to adjust to the loneliness or the fact I will never have another mate again is what got to me.

I remember waking up in the morning with it being unusually quiet. Normally there would be the kids yelling at each other for some stupid reason. But this morning it was different. At first I thought that they actually had left the house early for once, so I had gone into the main room hoping to find Zukini to assure her that there was no other female. Why would I be interested in another? When a Saiya-jin mates with one they are stuck with that one person. Unfortunately, she wasn't there.

I seriously looked everywhere, determined as I may have been to find them. But it was no use. There was no trace of them anywhere. I even asked Celipa, since she and Zukini were best of friends, but she didn't know either. And that's how she ended up in the search. I've decided to keep the rest of the crew out of this; this has nothing to do with them. Although I swear I will seriously hurt Panboukin later. He's the one who convinced me to do what I've been doing the past couple weeks.

I was still in the air when Celipa returned. She had gone to make sure no space pods had left Vegetasei during the past few hours, since I'm unsure exactly when Zukini left the house. Celipa shook her head to indicate that they were still on the planet. I sighed in relief.

"Then it shouldn't be too hard locating them," I smiled faintly. Yeah right, I told myself hotly. This is the biggest planet in the solar system. There are literally thousands of places she could be.

"We'd have a better chance with the others," Celipa suggested. "That is, if you're so determined to find them. And none of the males have any grudges against you, so I know that they will easily agree to it."

"Uh-huh. Right. So basically what you're saying is that we get together a small search party out of third class soldiers whose ****only**** purpose in the Planet Trade is to get the planets ready for sale, also considering that all of us had our scouters busted last time Freeza was here so at the moment they are getting fixed, and the fact that this has absolutely nothing to do with fighting of any kind?" I asked cynically.

She looked thoughtful for a moment, then she slowly nodded. "Yes, that's basically what I'm saying." I cursed quietly. This was ****not**** the greatest idea she's ever had. "But about the scouter incident..."

Toma wasn't around when Freeza came to Vegetasei, remember? So his scouter is still in good use."

I smirked. Time to get vicious. "Yeah, and come to think of it, you weren't at there either, yet both of you were still on the planet at the time. Was there something happening that I don't know about...?"

"Shut up!" Celipa growled angrily. I couldn't help myself but laugh. And was that a tinge of blush I saw on her cheeks? She cleared her throat and moved on to the next subject. "Well, anyway, you want to get them?"

To tell the truth, I didn't. Was I that anxious to look for her? Then again, the sooner I do so, the better chance I have to actually find her. But I wasn't ready to face her again. She could still be steamed right now, and maybe just needed time to cool off. That's right, she'll return on her own. No need for me to get in the way. I shook my head.

"We keep this confidential, Celipa," I warned. "This is only between you and me. Don't tell anybody about this. And if Zukini goes to you, tell me as soon as you can, alright?"

She arched an eyebrow at me. Was she going to back off and go ahead and tell them? "Whatever the argument was about, I'm sure Zukini was right. One, you give up too easily. Two, you're a jerk. Three, just because you're the leader of the crew you think you're the leader of everyone else. Four, you're a jerk-"

"You already said that," I snapped, realizing that the third thing she said was true.

"Just trying to make my point," she answered simply with a smirk. She sighed almost immediately after saying that and said, "Fine. Have it your way. I won't tell anybody."

"Good," I smiled in relief. No need to get everyone worked up if Zukini will return home by herself when she's ready. Besides, I need the peace and quiet in the house.

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> <p>An entire year has passed. I can't believe how successful I was. I expected someone to find me here, hell, even someone to spot my sons and me as we sneaked out of town. Luckily, it was still too early for anyone to be up and about. And no one knew of this place where I was staying. It was in a good spot in the middle of the forest, in a cave. <p>

But a year away from their father. Is that good for them? After all, I was sweating over how I hated Bardock for not spending enough time with them. Was I only making the situation worse for them? No, of course not. If I were, then they would've complained about wanting to return home by now. And Turles is doing a fine job training Raditz.

In two years the next full moon will come, so maybe then I could teach them how to control their Oozaru form, since that bastard's not going to do it. Sure, Turles would be old enough to get back to him

whenever he please, but I'm going to restrict him from it. In fact, both of them are not allowed to see their father again.

Oh, damn, what did I ever see in him? How could I have felt so drawn to him? I should've paid attention to Celipa's warnings all those so many years back. Before anything had started. I sighed. My life was a living nightmare.

Those have been my thoughts for the past year.

I saw Turles and Raditz return home with our food for the night. In a way I was teaching them how to hunt. But I would not be helping them if I had gone with them. This animal they caught was enough to last for a week or so. It was kind of big, after all. Much bigger than an Oozaru. Maybe living in the forest wasn't such a bad idea.

But a year was long enough to wait for objections from both of my sons.

"I'm sick of meat!" Raditz complained as he passed me. "I'm sick of **raw** meat! I miss those tenderized flesh back in town. Those were good."

"Too bad, we're not going back for a long while," I said as I took a seat in front of the animal after they had set it down. Just act normally, I told myself. Answer casually. Like you expected this._

"Mother, we've been gone for an entire year," Turles pointed out. "I miss my bed, I miss civilized food, I miss sparring different opponents. I think it's time we go home."

"No."

He pointed to Raditz, who had reluctantly grabbed a piece of the animal. "He's gotten very boring! He's too weak to defeat me now! He's not even a challenge."

"No, **you're** the one who's boring, **you're** the one who's not a challenge anymore," Raditz snapped. "And sit down before I eat all of this, you included."

Before Turles could give an angry response, I warned, "Boys, quit. I don't care how much you argue or complain, we are not going back. And Turles, if you don't eat now, you're never going to get any food until tomorrow so I suggest you sit. Don't say a word about it either, Raditz."

That got both of them quiet. Maybe now I can have a peaceful meal. But even as I ate, I thought about how much longer we will be able to last out here without breaking down. How much longer until someone finds us? I know I'll have to return someday. Hopefully that someday won't come for a very, very, long time.

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> <p>How could I not notice his strange behavior? I've never seen him moping around the cafÃ©, silent, and he has to be the first Saiya-jin in nearly twenty years to turn down a spar. This wasn't the first time he's done these things for the past five

months.

Celipa pretends not to notice, but I know she does. Totepo seem to have notice for a long time, but it's like him to keep quiet about it. Panboukin I'm not sure if he's seen Bardock's expressions, but he's just acting normally. I'm don't know whether or not to ask him about his problem, but to be on the safe side I'm not going to.

"So, did you get our next assignment?" Celipa asked him. No answer. His face had no specific expression. She waited for about ten seconds before asking again. When he ignored her repeatedly, she yelled in his ear, "Oi! Bardock! Wake up!"

"Say what?" Bardock looked to her quizzically. She asked again. He scratched his head, obviously unsure. "Eh um, I think I did."

"You think," she repeated, her eyes narrowed. Then she turned her head my direction in annoyance. Clearly she was getting pissed off. "Tell me **you** got them, Toma."

Since when did I ever do that? I'm not even sure where you get the papers for the assignments. I shook my head. She growled quietly and looked to Totepo and Panboukin, standing up to come face-to-face with both of them with arched eyebrows. "Panboukin, Totepo?"

They both gave their signs of negativity. "Males!" Celipa yelled as she stormed off. Looks like Bardock isn't the only one who is acting oddly lately.

"What's with her?" Panboukin asked, since he obviously noticed. I shrugged. He turned to Bardock. "You know this is your fault she's acting like that, right?"

"Shut up," he snapped coldly. "Am I to blame for.. er, not getting the assignment papers?"

"Yes, it is, you're the leader, it's your job," he pointed out.

I knew he was wrong. Celipa obviously was mad about something else. This wasn't the first time Bardock forgot about our next planet to rid life of. I tried asking her before, and every time it's the same thing, "Nothing, just family problems again". I know that's not true.

Before Bardock could retort back, Celipa returned with a folder in her hands and a scowl on her face. "We're going to Uchiwasei next. But since the population is so big we're going have to team up with another crew," she reported. She sat down and slapped the tanned folder on the table. "You two," she looked at both me and Bardock, "get your act together. That's the last time I'm **ever** doing that."

"That's the **only** time you've ever gotten them, thanks," I answered grabbing it and started looking through the papers. After I confirmed everything, I handed the folder to Totepo.

"Well, at least you have something to do now," she said to Bardock, ignoring me. "Now you don't have to be bored anymore. And if you turn this down I swear, I will hurt you so bad it won't even be funny!"

A cold, silent response is what she received. I didn't expect anything more according to the way he's been acting. I looked to Totepo, who had just passed the folder on to Panboukin. He gave me a knowing look, saying that he's noticed it too. What could be bothering our leader, our **friend**, so badly that he's distracted even from Saiya-jin instincts?

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> <p>I keep telling myself not to think about him. I got away just to forget all about him, but having your eldest son as a look-alike of Bardock doesn't help much. But damn, hunting was never so depressing for me. I thought it would get him off my mind. It didn't work. Maybe one of the reasons was because he taught me more than half the techniques I usually use.<p>

I took notice of several pods coming back towards Vegetasei. Turles has asked me more than enough times during the first few weeks of being away why I just didn't take all three of us off of Vegetasei. I said I didn't want to. Secretly, I did, but then Bardock would just check the logs of who left and what planet they went to, since all the space pods have homing devices and won't lift off until you were identified. So it would be harder for him to find me if I just stayed on the planet.

But even then, I would expect he would've at least located me by now, especially since I didn't move at all the past twenty-one months. Maybe he thought I did him a favor. Well, maybe I did. Maybe I did both of us a favor.

As I returned back to the cave, I saw that both of my sons were taking a break from training. They saw me with the meat and unenthusiastically grabbed some to eat. I refused to look at Turles. He resembles too much like Bardock, and I don't want to see anything that would remind me of him. But then again, hunting is what we used to do and this animal that was in front of me

I snarled quietly as I walked off, not looking at either of the two. As I did, I realized something. Something that I didn't want to admit to myself. But I didn't care what was true in my mind. There is no way I'm going to show weakness to my sons or Bardock by returning. I will stay here, no matter what my feelings may tell me what to do. After all, emotions always got in the way of what was really important. Always.

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"No. More. Tournaments," I growled.

"I said this is going to be **like** a tournament," Celipa kept urging me on. "To see who really is the strongest of us all."

I laughed sarcastically. "That's easy. I am. You all know that," I pointed out. It was true. Why else was I the leader? But the four of my friends stared at me, accusing me of trying to back out of it. I wasn't in the mood for sparring today. Or any other day before today for that matter. "Well, there are five of us. We'll need at least three more."

"No, we won't," Celipa smirked. "You say you're the strongest, right? So you will be in the final round. The rest of us will draw twigs to see who goes against whom first."

She bent down to pick up three sticks, and broke one of them in half. "Whoever draws the short one goes against me first. The rules are, you can only hit from the shoulder down, and no breaking bones. We can't afford to go into the healing tank. The spar is over when an opponent gives up, breaks the rules, or shows the first blood," she stuck out her hand which was wrapped around the sticks. "Okay, you can draw them now."

I wasn't paying attention after that. All I really saw was that Panboukin and Celipa were fighting each other and Totepo and Toma were. Sounded pretty good to me. But I didn't get to see who won because I was occupied, as empty my body felt.

I remembered when we were finished wiping out the Uchiwasei-jins, everyone from both crews were giving me a very weird stare. I had barely done anything at all, I know I did. I don't even remember what the inhabitants of that windy planet looked like. My mind was just blank, like it is now. Why, was the question I was asking myself.

An hour later, Toma came in front of me, indicating for me to go up to the empty space Celipa declared our personal sparring ring a few years ago. I had a feeling he won against everyone else. Why else would he be here? I followed him there with a small grunt, but I really wasn't paying attention. Which was a terrible fault on my side. I suddenly felt a surge of pain through my chest as I fell on my back.

I told myself that now was not the time to be feeling sorry for myself. I jumped to my feet, ready to attack him, but unfortunately, he was behind me rather than in front. I felt his heel hit my open side hard, in fact, so hard that I bit the side of my cheek hard enough to make it bleed. But I wasn't about to let it leak through. That would be signs of first blood.

I spun around, using my fist to hit him underneath his shoulder pads. Never stopping, I spun my foot around to kick his tail. That should give him a lot of pain, I thought with a grin.

I wasn't in the mood to fight, however, so swallowing my blood that was in my mouth, I decided to make Toma have the first blood from the same place, except in a different way. I covered my fist with my other hand and elbowed him in the stomach as hard as I could. I stepped back a couple steps, expecting to see what I was hoping to see. He rubbed his stomach and furrowed his brows. That's where I was it was a useless attack.

"Was that the best you could do?" Toma asked with a frown. "Just because it does hard pain to females doesn't mean it would for males, haven't you ever thought about that?"

"Not all females!" Celipa snapped.

"Females from Lettu, yes," Toma explained as he turned his attention back to me.

But my attention had flown away again. Zukini was from Lettu and I did do the same exact move on her the night she left. I was frustrated that night. I knew that was her weak spot so I hit her there aw, shit, that wasn't the brightest idea I've ever had.

You know, it is just like Toma to take advantage of his opponent who was distracted. There were no rules on energy attacks, so that was his next move. By the time I saw the light from the palm of his outstretched hand it was too late. The only thing I could do was mutter a curse and take the hit. Luckily it was only a weak one. Unfortunately, it was strong enough to make me bleed in various places.

"Che, I am the strongest of all of us', " Panboukin spat.

"Right."

Toma was glaring at me, telling me that he expected more from the leader of a Saiya-jin crew. Finally, he spoke up. "Something's bothering you and has been bothering you for at least six months. What's with you?"

Oh great. Was I really that obvious? "No, there is nothing bothering me," I lied.

"That's exactly what Celipa says whenever I ask her," he said. I looked to Celipa. Was she depressed also that Zukini was gone? What am I saying, of course. They were close friends. "You've been just as quiet as Totepo lately. And the last thing we need is another silent person. No offense," he said quickly to Totepo.

"None taken," Totepo answered as he glanced towards my direction. "I've noticed his behavior lately also. Celipa, might you know something of this?"

She glanced to me momentarily. "You'd best ask Bardock. It's his fault."

"What?!" I walked towards her to stare her down. "It was not **my** fault you understand? It was all her fault! **She**'s the one who left, not me!"

"But **you're** the reason she deserted you!" She yelled back at me. "She couldn't stand you anymore so that's why she took both of your kids and left!"

"Wait a second," Toma came between the two of us, placing his hands on both of our shoulders. He shook his head and sighed before letting go. "Let me get this straight. Zukini **left** you, Bardock? Why didn't you tell us that?"

"I thought she would just come back on her own and I didn't want to get everybody worked up over her disappearance," I admitted in a regretful tone. "But it's been two years. She hasn't come back yet. I don't know why. Maybe she left for good."

"Were you two arguing?" Panboukin asked. I didn't expect this kind of question from him, but I just nodded. "What about?"

"She was complaining about me not spending enough time with the kids, you know, doing what Saiya-jin fathers are supposed to do," I sighed.

"What I didn't get a chance to tell her, is that if a father-son bond occurs, things could get a little rough. Remember Tsube?"

"Yeah, he sacrificed himself to save his father, what a waste," Panboukin shook his head in disgust.

"Exactly. And what about my father? He never trained me and look where I am now!" I exclaimed. "One of the strongest third class Saiya-jins in the history of our race. But after we were finished arguing about that, we started arguing about.. damn, I was so angry I forgot what we were arguing about next. All I know is that afterwards" I sighed yet again. "Afterwards I hit her. At Lettu's ache point."

"So this is why you've been moping around, isn't it?" Totepo asked. I nodded solemnly. "I hate to say it Bardock, but it seems as if you can't live without her."

"What?" I asked in disbelief, realizing he was right.

He continued on and I let him, since this is the most he has spoken in a long time. "The pain is killing you slowly. You've been acting non Saiya-jin lately. Turning down spars, never doing your best, forgetting your duties. You only boast about your power a couple times a month, and it used to be a couple times a **week**. You are fighting a lonely battle. You won't win it by standing around here. After all, we are Saiya-jins. We are supposed to win every battle fate throws at us. And at the moment, you are losing this one."

I looked around at each of my friends. The information sunk in pretty quickly, as I nodded and agreed. Then I smirked. Can't be serious all the time, right? "Well, I guess I won't let that happen. And I don't need your help either, this is one I will win by myself."

I could feel the approval going through them all as I took off. This time, this search won't end until I find what I'm looking for. No matter how long it takes.

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> <p>My life is dumped. I used to be able to do more than sparring and hunting. I had a social life. I was able to go off to other planets. It's been too long since I've done that. Incredibly too long. <p>

Turles told me that ever since boredom struck me, I have become very lazy. Is it my fault? Mom's the one who took me away from my fun! And she is too stubborn to go back home! Why? Is she scared or something? No one's told me what happened the day before we left. Oh my life is a big dump.

Right now Mom and Turles are sparring each other. We can't even hurt each other very hard! I can't stand this anymore! And if I knew exactly the way Mom took when we "ran away" as one would call it, then I would leave! I don't fly fast enough to get far enough away from her, so doing an air-bourne search wouldn't help at all. What did I do to deserve this?

It is a humid day. I could survive it, since there was a very tiny stream nearby. Although the water tastes disgusting, I could live

with it. Honestly, I could only live with it for another three days. I cannot wait until I get very, very far away from this place. When I do, the first thing I was doing was to get a decent meal. Then the fun will begin. Unfortunately, with a stubborn mother, that won't be for a while. Even if I tried running away.

I sighed in boredom and laid down on the dirt, staring up at the sky. What happened, why did it happen, and why did I have to be dragged into this problem? I asked Mom about a thousand times, and she told me she dragged me **out** of the problem. When I asked what happened, she said she'd tell me when I was old enough to understand. I asked Turles, despite the fact he wouldn't be much help. He wasn't. He only told me it was my fault I didn't know.

If I had not been staring upwards, I wouldn't have spotted it. As bright as it was that day it was so high up that no shadow would be cast. Since it was just floating up there, I had the chance to look harder at it. The shape of it was awfully familiar. If I didn't know Turles was in the dugout, I would've guessed it was him. As I looked even closer, it was confirmed it wasn't my older brother.

Dad?

Well, it's about time! I thought gleefully as I ran into the cave.

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I know I saw Raditz. I didn't even get a chance to greet him as I landed. It seemed like he ran into the cave in front of him. Good. I don't have to bother getting Zukini myself. But it's been so long since I talked to my sons. I secretly wish Raditz hadn't gone in so I could at least say something. Oh well, at least it's given me more time to think about what I was going to say to my mate. Despite the fact we were, rather, **had** been separated for some time, she will always be. And I'm never going to deny it. Zukini, on the other hand...

A figure emerged from the entrance of the dimly-lit rock. It was her. I had to make the first move. "So this is where you've been hiding the past couple of years," I said solemnly. Then I grinned. "Not a very good place, if you ask me. Only took me half a year to find you."

"If so," she said coolly, "then why have I and my sons have been living here for two years?"

"Because I haven't started looking for you until six months ago," I arched a brow. Has she lost all her basic skills this quickly? Surely I mated with her because I knew she was intelligent, plus a variety of other reasons. And forgetting what she learns quickly isn't one of her traits. Her keen memorization skills were another concept the lured me to her. Unless, of course, she thought I was trying to trail her for the entire two years.

"Oh, I see," Zukini frowned. "And I suppose you had to get your friends to convince you to come get me?"

"What? No!" I exclaimed. "They helped me realize, but they didn't

make me do anything! I can make my own decisions. I am male, after all."

"So females can't make their own decisions?" She asked a little too casually.

"I didn't say that! All I said was that I decided for myself to come get you, and had little help from the crew," To myself I muttered, "Besides, they would've abandoned me if I didn't find you soon enough."

To tell the truth I was surprised Zukini had heard the final sentence. Keeping the same tone, she answered as if that was the only thing I said. "So you've decided to get me back so you could keep your friends," Then making sure she takes control of the conversation, she continued on. "Hm, well I have some news for you. I will not go back to that place we used to call home. Neither are Turles or Raditz. I won't let them, and there is nothing you can do about it."

She didn't move, just stood in the same place with her arms folded across her chest and a scowl being worn on her face. I did not think twice to take another ten steps towards her, speaking, "Oh really? What if I told you the entire story?"

"I don't have the patience for the entire story," she snapped.

I smirked as I took another few paces closer to her. "Neither have I to tell it," I said as I stopped. Five more steps and we would be face-to-face. She didn't even flinch. "All you need to know, and what everyone who cared to notice already knows, is that I've been turning down spars, forgetting my duties as a squad leader, and Toma beat the hell out of me the day I decided to look for you. Face it, it's your fault."

She arched a brow upwards. "My fault?" She repeated.

"Your fault that I've been acting strangely around people I should feel comfortable with," I explained. "Your fault that Celipa has been acting more pissed off than she usually is. You didn't even let me tell you what I've really been doing the past few days before then. Overall, I'd have to say it was Panboukin's fault for all of this."

"Keep going, you have my attention," she responded in the same tone she had been keeping the entire conversation, keeping the same expression. However, I knew she was truly intrigued.

"It was true, there was no other female. But I'll get right to the point," I added quickly, knowing her patience span, if she had any. "Panboukin somehow convinced me to go this illegal tournament in the underground training hall. I think I was drunk that night, I don't know. But ever since I got in and won, I was stuck until the tournament was finished or until I lost."

Then she had to ask the question I seriously dreaded answering to anyone, especially to her. "And when was it over?"

"It was the finals, Zukini. I lost. That's why I was so angry."

"And you didn't tell me because...?"

"Like I said, it was illegal."

She looked thoughtful for a minute. Finally she shook her head and gave me a lopsided grin. "I thought you said before that the reasons were enough to get past even the king himself."

"Ah, yeah, well, I had to come up with something then," I winced as I realized that I really had said that. It was a bold-faced lie. If Vegeta found out we were doing that, he'd have all of the participants' head. Mine included. I didn't even tell Celipa, Totepo, hell, not even Toma I had done that. That's how bad it was. And to keep reassuring Zukini I told her that bit of information although that topic was over.

She didn't seem convinced at all until I mentioned Toma's name. "Let me get this straight," she said, pointing an index finger up to the sky in my face. She let it drop before saying, "You didn't tell your best friend something that is nothing compared to what you did back during the last year of military training, which, as far as I was concerned, you told him immediately after the shock of doing something worse than illegal had worn off? And several months later, after the consequences had taken place? He was the first person you told, and you didn't even tell him of this illegal concept."

"Well, there are some secrets you ought to keep to yourself," I reminded her, having a small look of disgust as I remembered. But better to keep in the conversation. "Now I have nothing to hide from you. Pity." Honestly, I always considered during that nine-day period to tell both Toma and Zukini, since they were the only two I felt comfortable telling any secrets to. Occasionally Totepo, but that's only because he's not one to talk, and when he does it's always at the right timing.

"No," Zukini said firmly. At first I thought she meant I was missing something. But she didn't say anything else after that. I asked her what she meant by that. She chuckled slightly. "You are so stupid. No. I'm not returning. You're lucky I've changed my mind about one thing. Go ahead and take the brats. But **I'm** not going. There's nothing you can do to change my mind."

"Really?" I smirked as I took a big enough step towards her to grab her closer to me. There was no space between us as she looked at me with a startled face. "You never learn, can you? There's nothing I can **say** to change your mind. There's something, however, I **can** **do** to help you make the decision."

Without thinking any further and without wasting any time, I leaned in so my lips made contact with hers. I felt her jerk back slightly in surprise, but she gave in almost immediately afterwards. I knew exactly why. Her arms came around to embrace me, and I smiled, knowing that things were heading over in my favor.

This was what I needed. This feeling, this sensation was what was holding me back. Yes, I admit it. I don't care right now if it's a sign of weakness. I don't care if I will regret saying this later. The reason for my actions were in my arms and I swear I won't do anything to drive it away anymore.

We held each other for some time. Who was keeping track? I think we would have stayed that way for all eternity had it not been for the boys failing at their attempt to argue quietly. The two of us pulled away rather reluctantly and looked inside the cave. Turles and Raditz had obviously been watching since the bickering ceased immediately.

I chuckled in amusement. "All right, all right, come on out so I can see you. I want to make sure you aren't scrawny from living so far away from civilization," I looked to Zukini and smirked. "You do sort of look thin yourself, but you certainly haven't lost your touch."

She returned the smile, then looked back to our sons. That's when I had my first sight of them in over two years. I'd forgotten how fast Saiya-jin youths grow. Turles was a young adolescent now and Raditz was in his last year of the childhood life. I couldn't help but complete the grin on my face. Well, if Zukini didn't take care of herself during this long period of time, she did a great job with our heirs.

Finally she announced, "Ver well then. You boys head on home. Your father and I will be there as soon as we can, after we settle some differences," she flashed another smile at me before turning back to our sons. "Go on ahead."

"It's about time," Raditz muttered as he ran past us. Turles seemed to have been relieved. They should be able to find the way home. That is, if they were truly Zukini's sons.

As they took off I looked back to my mate, the one who had me left in a darkness of emptiness. The one who is the only person who could save me from the torture I had lived through. The one, as Totepo had put it, that I couldn't live without.

To keep my claim valid, I kissed her again with the most passion than I've ever given her in a countless amount of years. Even more than before Turles was conceived...

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> <p>"I guess it's settled then," the doctor announced. "If it's a female, it dies. A male, it lives."

"I wish you would quit calling the brat 'it'," Zukini growled, despite the pain she was in. "The kid is, or will be, a living thing! A **Saiya-jin**, for that matter!"

"I swear, you get any angrier you'd become the legend," Bardock joked quietly.

"You're no help."

Bending down to speak quietly in her ear, he made a promise. "Male or female, that kid is ours, made from forgiven love. She will live... or he. Pray for our sake it's female, however. It's your turn to take my place in parenting." He smiled softly. "Time to do another illegal thing."

After all, he added in his mind, 'the lonely battle' has been won

in my favor. And this child is the result of it._

* * *

> <p>Author's Note: The Saiya-jins may have been
acting out of character, but once this idea had been stuck in my mind
I had to go along with it. Could have easily been a Vegeta/Bulma
story, however...

End
file.